

Doping Inquiry Into Cycling Bronze Opens

On Thursday, the International Olympic Committee opened an investigation into the role of Lance Armstrong in a doping scandal that has tarnished the image of professional cycling besides wiping out his seven Tour de France titles. The investigation would also mean that the cyclist may lose his Olympic bronze medal he won in the road time trial at the 2000 [Sydney Olympics](#).

The cyclist finished behind winner and U.S. Postal Service teammate Vyacheslav Ekimov of Russia and Jan Ullrich of Germany and now his medal will go to Abraham Olano Manzano of Spain, who stands to move up to bronze if Armstrong is stripped of the medal. Vyacheslav Ekimov was upgraded to the gold after the IOC stripped a former Armstrong teammate, Tyler Hamilton, of his gold medal from the 2004 Athens Olympics after he admitted to using performance enhancing drugs.

A former Armstrong teammate who won the time-trial bronze at the 2008 Beijing Games, Levi Leipheimer, may also have his medal revoked after he confessed to doping. He is presently serving a reduced, six-month suspension after cooperating with the USADA inquiry. Alberto Contador, the Spaniard who was stripped of the 2010 Tour de France title after testing positive for [clenbuterol](#), finished fourth behind Leipheimer in 2008.

The Olympic involvement of other riders and officials implicated in a U.S. Anti-Doping Agency report will also be examined by the IOC. The USADA report detailed "the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen." After the release of this report, it was sent to the governing body of cycling (UCI) and World Anti-doping Agency (WADA). The UCI endorsed the sanctions imposed on the cyclist by USADA and said Armstrong had no place in cycling. The United States Anti-doping Agency banned the seven-time winner of Tour de France for life and stripped him of all his titles after August 1, 1998.

The International Olympic Committee said in a statement that it will start the process regarding the involving of Armstrong, other riders, and their entourages. The medals could come up for review at the executive board meeting of the IOC next month in Lausanne, Switzerland. Meanwhile, the International Olympic Committee is also evaluating the plans of UCI for an independent investigation for examining the allegations about the own conduct of the federation and its relations with the cyclist as raised by the report by USADA.

The IOC said it has taken note of the decision made by the governing body of cycling and welcomes every measure taken to shed light on the full extent of the episode and to help the sport of cycling reform to move forward. It also added that that finding of the independent commission that will be looking into the role of the UCI and the recommendations for a healthy future for the game are awaited. However, the IOC may find itself in a dilemma whether to apply the eight-year statute for revising Olympic results or not. IOC vice president Thomas Bach said the report by the USADA took an intriguing approach that leaves the eight-year period open to discussion.